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## **Sana'Ullah Amritsari's Contributions to the Study of Hinduism**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Abul Wafa Sana'Ullah Amritsari was an eminent and prominent Muslim Indian scholar of the modern era, who played a vital role in the revival of Islam in the subcontinent and the establishment and protection of the Indian Muslim identity. The article aims to explore, elaborate, and analyzed the contributions of Amritsari through the historic record literature review method with a qualitative approach. It can be concluded that he was a key figure in the Muslim community in India who successfully safeguarded the community against cultural absorption from a two-pronged threat: the modern revivalist Hindu movements like the Arya Samaj & Brahmo Samaj and the Christian Missionary Movement. In his struggle against these anti-Islamic elements, Amritsari not only introduced himself but studied in great detail the Hindu & Christian scriptures, successfully employing through his study the same scriptures to prove the superiority of Islam as a religion. His polemical engagements with Hindus and Christians were varying and always tilted the balance in his – therefore, Islam's – favour. Some of his greatest encounters with religious opponents include the Jabalpur Debate against Arya Samaj leaders and the Hyderabad debate against Dharam Pal. Amritsari dedicated his life fully to this purpose and employed every tool at his disposal including newspapers; his struggle to support Islam in the raging polemic encounter of three world religions on Indian soil in the twentieth century cements not only his oratory expertise but also attests to an – unrecognized perhaps but vital nonetheless – role in the struggle for freedom in India.*

**Keywords:** *Sana'Ullah; Amritsari; Hindu; Studies; Islamic; Polemics; Subcontinent;*

## Introduction

Impeccable of character, a genius of mind and highly original and critical of thought, Sana'Ullah Amritsari served as a beacon of hope in the divisive climate of nineteenth-century India. Well-known not only for his distinguished polemical prowess to which scholars like Mahmoud-ul-Hasan applied in times of need but also for his compassionate and just outlook on Indian Society, Sana'Ullah's contributions to many fields – including Qur'anic exegesis – have stood the test of time.

His most precious work, however, is the subject of this study, which is his great contribution to Islamic Hindu Studies in the Indian subcontinent. Before the reader is introduced to his work, however, they must have an understanding of the man himself, which can be achieved by a quick dive into his early years. From there, it proceeds to his oral and written contribution to Hindu Studies, a quick examination of his response specifically to the Hindu Ārya Samāji notion of Reincarnation before the author comments – by way of conclusion – on his effect on Hindu Studies and polemics in the Indian subcontinent.

The methodological approach employed by the author is strictly descriptive, for the nature of the study demands not analysis but a coherent compilation.

## Biography

Born in 1866 or 1868 in Amritsar (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980, p.48), his roots are traced to Kashmir by biographers who claim that his ancestors converted to Islam a long time ago. His father, *Muhammad* Khizar Jo, migrated from Kashmir to Amritsar after the rise of anti-Muslim elements in the region (Ayesh, 1996, p.14).

His parents both passed away in Amritsari's childhood, his father leaving the child at the age of 7 (Ayesh, 1996, p.14) and the mother at 14 (Ayesh, 1996, p.15). Amritsari's subsistence was derived from the

sewing taught him by his elder brother *Muhammad* Ibrahim, who was a tailor.

Amritsari studied the Prophetic traditions with:

1. Abdul-Mannān WazīrAbadi<sup>1</sup>
2. Ahmadullah Amritsari<sup>2</sup>
3. Ghulam Ali Qasūri<sup>3</sup>

Of course, this was before his admission into the Dār-ul-Ulūm Deoband where he studied with the infamous Maḥmūd-ul-Ḥassan (The first student of the Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband, Hassan graduated from the institution in 1874 and started teaching there soon after. His translation of the holy Qur'an received critical acclaim (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980 p.27-28).

Of his academic exposure to the *Hadith* sciences, Amritsari says, "I benefited in the study of the Prophetic traditions from three schools of thought (Hassan, 1989, p.35) each different from the other" (Ayesh, 1996, p.17).

After graduating from the Dār-ul-Ulūm in 1892, he started his career as a teacher in his hometown, and dabbled in journalism (his newspaper *Ahl-E-Hadith* remained in circulation for 44 years) (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980, p.48) and polemics (his celebrated engagement in the *Mubāhala* (Self-cursing or imprecation consisting of an oath "I swear that X" followed by a self-curse "God curse me if Y" (Mikati, 2019, p.317-18) issued by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is claimed by many to be directly responsible for the latter's death a year after the curse (Mikati, 2019, p.330), whereas Amritsari lived for forty years after the *Mubāhala* (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980, p.48).

The foundation of the Jami'at Ulema-E-Hind is also attributed to Amritsari (among others); he was also politically active during the partition of the subcontinent and subsequently moved to Gujranwala after 1947 (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980, p.49). He passed away in the Pakistani city of Sargodha in 1948 and was buried there. (Zufayr-ul-Din, 1980, p.49). An elegy (Ayesh, 1996, p.60)

<sup>1</sup> Wazirabadi (1916 C.E.) was an expert in the Hadith sciences who spent a major portion of his teaching career in Wazirabad after studying with Nazir Hassan Dihlawi. He taught Amritsari when the latter was only 14.

Bin Ayesh Muhammad, "Al-Shaykh Sanaullah Al-Amritsari wa Juhduhū Al-Da'wiyyah," 45.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Ubaydah Ahmadullah Amritsari (1916 C.E.) was a Salafi scholar in the city of Amritsar and the

author of works like "Al-Qawl Al-Mahmud fi Bayan-il-Mawlad". He taught Sana'Ullah Amritsari logic and grammar.

<sup>3</sup> Qasuri (1889 C.E.) was an Indian scholar of the Ahl-ul-Hadith school of thought based in Amritsar who taught Amritsari the elementary books from the standard Medressah syllabus.

penned by a contemporary of his mourns his passage saying,

هذا ثناء الله كان أحببنا  
يمسي ويصبح مرشداً طرق الهدى  
ما كان حياً كان ينصر ديننا  
ويصونه من مفسد حين اعتدى

*Behold, Sanaullah! The most beloved of us all,*

*Directing men towards the paths of guidance by day and by night.*

*For as long as he lived, he aided our religion*

*Protected it from the blows of corrupters when dealt with all their might.*

Some of his significant works include:

1. *Tafsīr-ul-Qur'an bi Kalām'il-Rahmān*; an Arabic work of exegesis.
2. *Taqābul-E-Thalātha*; a polemical & comparative work that sought to prove the Qur'an's divinity after comparing it to other divine scriptures.
3. *Tafsīr Thanā'i*; an Urdu work of exegesis.

Amritsari lived in troubled times; the English colonizers' oppressive techniques resulted in the 1857 war of freedom in which the Muslims were defeated and abandoned by their Hindu counterparts to face the English punishment alone. The overtaking of seminaries, the Christian Missionary Movement gaining momentum, and the closing of the doors of Indian offices to Muslim employees were all part of this punishment.

It would be incorrect to assume, however, that the English minds were concerned only with Islam. They also attempted to vindicate the downtrodden factions of Indian society that owed their oppression to Hinduism. Their attempt to change social norms and attack social hierarchies was countered by movements like the fundamentalist Hindu Brahmo Samāj and Ārya Samāj. Regrettably, these movements would later collude with the Christian missionaries to undermine Islam in the subcontinent, which would naturally deepen the rift between the two religions.

With the alliance between the Indian Hindus and the Christian Missionaries began the induction of the former into higher offices and the sphere of official and academic life in India. The formal study of Hinduism as an oriental religion began with multiple translations of Hindu scriptures into

English; Carey of William College, Calcutta gained particular prominence after his launch of the Bengali journal *Samachar Darpan*, his translations of the Upanishads and Shakuntala to English & Latin and his compilation of the Indian Dictionary. Many emerging trends in Indian literature are attributed to Carey's influence on regional literature (Rafiq, 1995, p.89).

As the Hindu Missionary Movements accelerated their activism and turned their focus from defending the classical Hindu creed against the onslaught of Christianity to conspiring against Indian Islam, it became obvious that somebody from the Indian Muslim community would have to respond to their consistent propaganda.

It was Sana'Ullah Amritsari who rose to the call and engaged in verbal and written polemical dialogue with the Hindu missionaries from the Ārya Samāj & the Brahmo Samāj who insisted that the Hinduism they preached was one of equality and brotherhood, and did not advocate the social hierarchy and had integrated within itself the spirit of the modern times. This modern Hinduism was academic in nature and could sustain itself in the face of scientific inquiry; it had permitted the reading of the Vedas to the masses in an attempt to prove to them that the Vedic religion was the oldest, essential and most developed world religion.

Another important ploy of the flagbearers of modern Hinduism was their attempts at proving the internal discrepancies between the Qur'an and the Islamic creed to the Muslim masses. They also accused Islam of being violent and unjust in nature. In response to these accusations, Amritsari's stance was not defensive but aggressive. He criticized the Hindu scriptures in his oral and written engagements with critics of Islam, and his debates with the proponents of the new Hinduism resulted in the conversion of great numbers of Hindus to Islam, as well as the strengthening of the Muslims' faith.

Some of Amritsari's most infamous debates (Khadim, 1988, p.391-446) with Hindus are:

### **1. The Jabalpur Debate**

Lasting ten days and earning the title "The Great Debate", it was an oral engagement with Ārya Samāj leaders in 1915 and focused on three main issues:

- › Oneness in Qualities
- › Is Islam the religion of the Vedas or a universal religion?
- › Reincarnation

## 2. The Wajhwali Debate

Held in 1918, this debate was about Islamic divorce. Amritsari not only defended the Islamic rulings regarding divorce but also called for modifications in the Hindu rulings regarding marriage. The debate was effective enough to bring about substantial change in Hindu practice, and eventually, the right of an adult to divorce was recognized by the Hindu community of India.

## 3. The Khorjah Encounter

An initial debate in Khorjah between Shaykh Mubarek Husein Sanbhali & *Pandit Chandra Prakash* in Khorjah, Bulandsheher – after the publication of anti-Islamic propagandist materials by the latter – resulted in the conversion of the *Pandit* among a handful of other Hindus. This event so incensed the local Ārya Samāji leadership that they challenged leading Indian Muslim scholars to a polemical debate titled “Deen-E-Haqq” or the True Faith.

Intellectuals like Seyyed Anwar Shah, Murtaza Hassan Muradabadi, Sheikh Muhammad Ibrahim and Sana’Ullah Amritsari participated as representatives of the Indian Muslims and won the debate for their side.

## 4. His Debate with *Dharam Bhikshu*

*Pandit Dharam Bhakshu* debated Amritsari in 1920 on the issue of the occurrence of the soul. The debate lasted two days and Amritsari emerged victorious after establishing the soul’s creation in contrast with the Hindu teachings of its eternal existence.

## 5. Debate at the DAV College

The faculty of Dayanand Anglo Veda College challenged Amritsari to a debate in which they were brutally defeated in 1921.

## 6. Debate with *Ram Chandra*

Centered around the issue of the eternity of matter and soul, this debate was held in 1921. His last debate with *Pandit Ram Chandra* occurred in 1944 in the DAV College and was attended by the institution’s senior faculty and lawyers from the local Hindu & Sikh communities who testified to the strength of Amritsari’s arguments, a

claim that was accepted gracefully by the *Pandit*.

## 7. His Debate with *Dharam Pal*

*Dharam Pal*’s claim – which led to much unrest within the Muslim community in India – was that the Muslim consumption of meat resulted in the community’s collective libido. Amritsari contested this claim successfully using both empirical and theoretical evidence.

## 8. The Hyderabad Debate

Focused on the issue of Reincarnation and the eternity of the Vedas, Amritsari debated against two separate rivals in Hyderabad; *Pandit Sita Dev* debated in favour of the former topic and *Dharam Bhakshu* against the latter. Amritsari was able to deny the eternity of the Vedas by a comparative presentation of the different editions of the Vedas as well as the occurrence of alteration and abrogation in the Hindu scriptures.

## 9. The Debate of Dina Naju

Amritsari successfully proved the cancellation of the Vedas much to the consternation of his opponent, Prem Chandra.

## 10. The Najina Debate

Propelled by the Ārya Samāj leadership’s consistent depreciation of Islam & its Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the local scholarship’s inability to come up with an adequate response, leading Indian Muslim scholars were invited to engage with the Ārya Samāj in a conclusive debate. Those invited included:

- Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hasan of Deoband
- Ustadh Muhammad Hassan of Amroha
- Ustadh Muhammad Hassan of Muradabad
- Maulana Ali Ahmad Meerathi
- Sheikh Abul Farah Panipat

The Najina locals – upon advice from those invited for the polemical engagement – requested that Amritsari, too, attend the debate. He obliged, and the ensuing debate (which was originally scheduled to last seven days) saw him debate on the Revelation of the Vedas against the following Ārya Samājis:

- *Atma Ram*
- *Pandit Karba Ram*
- *Lala Wazir Chand*

The Ārya Samāji leaders called for the debate to be concluded on the fifth day, and its immediate effect was the conversion of eleven Hindus to Islam. Swami Darshanand would later confess to the weak opposition of the Ārya Samājis.

### **11. His Debate with *Aatma Ram***

This debate took place in Amritsar upon *Atma Ram*'s invitation, who intended for it to be revenge for *Dhiram Bhakshu*'s defeat. Amritsari, however, emerged victorious once again. In a time of great spiritual uneasiness in the Muslim community that was faced on the one hand with Western ideals gaining rapid popularity around the globe, and on the other with the polemical opposition from followers of other Indian religions, Amritsari's oratory was a precious academic and spiritual reviver, especially against the latter adversary.

His polemical efforts against Hinduism manifested themselves in more than oratory; his publications in the field are numerous, each more fascinating than the next. Some of his most well-known works against Hinduism are:

#### **1. *Haqq Prakash***

Its first edition was published in 1900, and the most recent Pakistani edition (the work's tenth edition) was published in 1983 by Nadwatul Muhadditheen in Gujranwala, Pakistan ([Bashir, 1997](#)). The book was written in response to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder and leader of the Ārya Samāj Movement, who wrote a book titled *Sitharth Prakash*, and presented 159 objections to the Qur'an. Amritsari's responding book was appreciated by the Indian Muslim community and scholars alike for its adequacy.

#### **2. *Kitab-ul-Rahman***

"Are the Vedas the Word of God, or is the Qur'an?" by *Pandit Dharam Bhakshu* was a thesis on the Vedas being revealed scriptures. Amritsari's *Kitab-ul-Rahman* attempted to compare the different versions of the Vedas to prove successfully that they contained incompatible differences, alterations irreconcilable to the text, mistakes, additions to and subtractions from the text that prevented the Vedas from being labelled the word of God or the revealed scriptures. The book was first published in 1903.

### **3. *Azamat-ul-Islam***

Since its publication in 1903, the book has been reprinted six times, with the last edition coming out in 1981. It was written in response to a book by a young Muslim man who had converted to Hinduism and had penned in it nearly 116 objections to Islam that had driven him to niddah or apostasy. Amritsari's efforts in the responding *Azamat-il-Islam* bore fruit and the young man converted to Islam once again, taking the name Ghazi Mahmoud, and thanked Amritsari for alleviating his suspicions against Islam.

### **4. *The Origin of the Vedas***

This book targeted the Hindu belief of the eternity of the Vedas (springing from the belief of the eternal world) and they're being the fundamental source of all human knowledge, and all human religions. Amritsari proved in this book that the Vedas had an origin using the scriptures themselves. The book was published first in 1903, with the second edition printed in 1907, and the third in 1913.

### **5. *The Devria Debate***

This book was a compilation of Amritsari's arguments as presented in a debate that was held in 1903 titled "Are the Vedas true, or Is the Qur'an?" between himself and Ārya Samāji leadership in the UP, and that continued for 5 days. Amritsari won the debate and published its contents for the benefit of the general public.

### **6. *Marriage and Rulings (regarding) Widows***

First published in 1904 and witnessing three subsequent reprints in 1910, 1917 and 1928, it contained a critique of the Hindu attitudes (of religious origins) towards widowhood like the impermissibility of remarriage and the appalling practice of Sutti.

### **7. *The Creation of the World***

This work is a confrontation of the Hindu belief of the eternity of the world upon which rests the entire premise of reincarnation. Amritsari attempted to prove the creation of the world – as opposed to its eternal existence – through reasoning. The book was published first in 1902, with succeeding editions in 1904 and 1910.

### **8. *Revelation***

With its first edition printed in 1904 and the second in 1917, Amritsari's Revelation dealt with the issue of revelation, its definition and its conditions, all of which were old bones of contention within the Hindu-Muslim community of India. His work contained an examination of the definition and conditions of revelation in the light of Hindu scriptures.

**9. *Al-Rukub fil-Safinati Fi Manazirat-il-Nakina***

This book – published in 1904 – was a compilation of the arguments put forward by Amritsari during his infamous debate in Najina which has been mentioned in detail on page 6 of the current work.

**10. *The Knowledge & Rationale of Swami Dayanand***

Criticizing Dayanand's propensity to modifications and alterations when quoting Muslim scholarship on Islamic creed and rulings to suit his agenda, this work was published first in 1905 and was reprinted in 1910.

**11. *The Four Prayers***

The first edition of this work was published in 1900, the second came out in 1902 and the third in 1905. It was a comparative appraisal of the Islamic, Hindu, Christian & Aryan prayer through which he proved the superiority of the Islamic prayer over the rest in terms of individual and communal benefits.

**12. *The Supremacy of Islam***

The book was a response to Mahasha Dharam Pal's Tahzeeb-ul-Islam which depreciated the world religion propagated enthusiastically by Amritsari; the book comprises four volumes and was published in parts in 1905 and 1906.

**13. *The Great Qur'an***

A comparative study of the claims of the Qur'an and the Vedas being revealed scriptures, and successfully upholding the Qur'anic claim of being a revealed scripture, this book by Amritsari was published in 1907, and reprinted in 1910.

**14. *Dayanand's Patchwork***

Amritsari penned this forceful critique of the Ārya Samāji principles, and the exposure of the Movement's founder Swami Dayanand's nonadherence to said principles. The book was published in 1908.

**15. *The Virtue of Islam***

This book was a response to Dharam Pal's Nakh-ul-Islam which was a critique of the Islamic creed and its depreciation. The book's first edition was published in 1909, and the second in 1911.

**16. *A Treatise on Reincarnation***

With its first edition appearing in 1899 and the fifth in 1921, it was written in retaliation to Atma Ram's work that attempted to prove reincarnation from the Qur'an. Amritsari correctly reinterpreted the verses used by Ram to incorrectly reconcile the Islamic text and the issue of reincarnation.

**17. *The Fruits of Reincarnation***

Published in 1910, the book was a critique of the belief in reincarnation and attempted to prove its impossibility using reason.

**18. *The Qur'an & other Holy Scriptures***

This book was an attempt to establish the Qur'an's superiority over other holy scriptures by comparing the two; it was published first in 1910.

**19. *Jihad in the Vedas***

The Hindus routinely accused Islam of violence and aggression, drawing from the Qur'anic injunctions of Jihad in the path of God. Amritsari – in this work – produced evidence that the Vedas too invited the man to a form of armed struggle, and the objections raised against the Qur'an thus applied to them, too. The work was published first in 1911.

**20. *The Jabalpur Debate***

This book was a compilation of Amritsari's arguments as presented in his debate with Mahasha Dharam Ber Ji and Dr Lakshmi Datt Bhansali on:

- Eternity of the Soul or its Creation
- The Globality of Islam or the Vedas
- Reincarnation

**21. *The Khorjah Debate***

The book tells the story of the infamous debate in Bulendsheher titled "The True Religion: Islam or the Vedic Dharam?" that was won by Amritsari. The book detailing the debate was published in 1917.

**22. *The Evidence of Muhammad's Prophethood is found in the Vedas, The Torah & the Bible***

Published first in 1923 and then, in 1957, the book was penned as a response to the great clamor against the Muslim Prophet

from Hindu intellectuals; Amritsari successfully proved – using religious texts unIslamic in nature – that religious scriptures predict the arrival of Seyyidina Muhammad ﷺ.

### **23. *The Revealed Book***

Another work dealing with the evidence of the revelation of the Qur'an, this book had four editions in 1898, 1907, 1913 & 1923 respectively.

### **24. *The Sacred Prophet* ﷺ**

“The Colorful Prophet” or Rangila Rasul was an infamous text by a Hindu author about the Muslim Prophet that was termed vicious and blasphemous and turned many hairs in the Muslim community across the Indian Subcontinent. Amritsari recognized the importance of an urgent and authentic response to the divisive book and penned “The Sacred Prophet ﷺ” in 1924. It was one of his most well-known and well-received works by scholars and laymen alike, and Amritsari himself used to take open pride in it out of his various works.

The book had seven editions after the first one: the second in 1925, the third in 1960, the fourth in 1964 (published in Gujranwala), the fifth in 1964 (published in Sargodha), the sixth in 1970 (published in Delhi), the seventh in 1980 (published in Delhi), and the eighth in 1982, published under the supervision of the Nadwatul-Muhadditheen, Gujranwala.

### **25. *The Sana'i Papers***

The Risalah Sana'iyyah was a compilation of the beliefs of the fundamental creeds and beliefs of a diverse set of sects and religions that had seen the light of the day during his time in the Indian subcontinent. Amritsari – in the Sana'i Papers – critiques these beliefs after presenting them completely and also compares the beliefs and creeds with each other. Some of the important beliefs compiled and critiqued by Amritsari in this text belong to the following sects/religions:

- Al-Dahriyyah
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Ārya Samāj
- Radha Swami
- Sikhism
- Denial of Prophethood
- Bahai Faith

- Shia Islam
- Qadyaniyat
- Ahl-ul-Qur'an
- Ashab-ul-Tabi'ah
- Ahl-ul-Hadith

### **26. *Nikah in Arya***

The Arya considered reason the ultimate source of morality and the sole measure of the correctness of religion. In light of reason, they claimed the Hindu injunctions regarding marriage were justified, sound and correct. In this book, Amritsari expounded upon the Islamic purpose behind the institution of marriage, the types of Nikah in Islam and its legal position and its utility in uniting the society (Rabbani, and Munawwaar 1994, p.62). He also countered the objections against the Islamic Nikah raised by the Hindus. The book was published in 1925.

### **27. *The Arya Principles***

The eternity of matter, soul and the universe are a part of the fundamental creed of Hinduism in general and Ārya Samāj specifically. It was these three beliefs that Amritsari contended with in this book rationally; the book was published in 1926, with a subsequent edition in 1929.

### **28. *The Indian Reformers***

This work was a critique of self-proclaimed reformers like Swami Dayanand (founder of the Ārya Samāj) and Mirza Ghulam Ahmed (alleged Prophet of the Qadiyani faith) and illustrated the gaping holes in their rhetoric and their self-serving verbal and academic inconstancies. He also broke down excerpts from both their works to expose their anti-Islamism. The book was published in 1937.

### **29. *The Arya Alterations***

The book – published in 1943 – was an attempt to highlight the modifications made by the followers of Dayanand Saraswati in his infamous work “Sitharth Prakash” which culminated in the alteration of fundamental Arya creeds. Amritsari proved his claims of modifications in Dayanand's work by detailed comparisons between later editions of Sitharth Prakash and earlier ones, as well as the varying translations of the work with the original Hindi text.

### **30. *Diverse Notes on the Comparative Study of the Vedas and the Qur'an***

This book – irretrievably lost during the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 – is

supposedly a study of the various linguistic and temporal inconsistencies in the different versions of the Vedas (Saudhravi, 1984, p.92).

### 31. The Education of Islam

The book was a response to Mahasha Dharam Pal's concerns regarding Islam and his critiques of religion. Amritsari's written contributions to the polemical field are diverse in number and rich in content, and while the brief list above goes some way in showcasing the diversity and divergence of his polemical works, it is imperative to engage with the texts to acquire even a shallow understanding of the richness of his work. The following section attempts to break down his critique of the belief in Reincarnation to give the reader a clearer look into the mind of this Muslim clerical genius:

Amritsari's "Treatise on Reincarnation" – written in response to *Atma Ram & Pandit Lek Ram* – examines reincarnation as found in the Hindu creed, and the actual meaning of the Qur'anic verses that have been utilized incorrectly as Qur'anic evidence of reincarnation by Hindu polemicists. The book also attempts to provide rational evidence of the inaccuracy of reincarnation, in keeping with the Ārya Samāji notion that reason is the measure of the correctness of religion.

Amritsari initiates the discussion with a detailed explanation of the Hindu views regarding reincarnation: "The Hindus believe in A wagon or the return of the soul after the body's death to the earthly kingdom within another human or animal body. Therefore, every intellectual and applied action pure or impure carries within it pure or impure fruit, and people are according to their actions, and all earthly misfortunes are but manifestations of the terrible acts committed by the troubled ones in their previous lives. The division of the world into gods and humans, of society into castes and even of humankind into male and female relies upon this belief, except that the removal of a soul from one body to another is not quite an accidental matter, but occurs as a new birth in a new body. By this law, material bodies in the world are divided into two kinds:

1. *Karam Joni* (The Place of Action)
2. *Bhog Joni* (The Place of Punishment)

Human bodies are categorized as *Karam Joni*, for the souls residing in these can act nobly or poorly. The bodies of animals and insects, however, are considered souls in punishment and are therefore *Bhog Joni*. Reincarnation, then, is the departure of the soul – the doer of many deeds good or bad – from the body of its (original) owner, its return and placement into a new body. With this placement begins its new birth and it lives in distress or peace according to the deeds committed by it in its previous body" (Amritsari, 1896., p.764).

With this explanation of the Hindu theory of reincarnation of the soul, Amritsari mentions the Qur'anic verses used by them to prove the correctness of reincarnation in the light of the Qur'an:

• **وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ**

And assuredly, you know of those of you who trespassed in the matter of the Sabbath, and We said to them, be you apes despised (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 65:44).

• **فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ**

So when they exceeded the limits of what they were prohibited, We said to them: be ye apes despised (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 166:164).

• **قُلْ هَلْ أَنْبِئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ**

Say Thou: O People of the Book, shall I declare to you something worse as way with Allah than that? It is they whom Allah has accursed and with whom He is angered and whom some He has changed into apes and swine (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 60:441).

• **وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ**

And recall when thy Lord brought forth from the children of Adam their posterity from their backs and made them testify as to themselves, saying, am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We testify (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 172:165).

• **وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْواتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾**

And reckon not thou those slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive



and with their Lord and provided for (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 169:284).

- نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَلَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا ﴿الانسان: ٢٨﴾

It is We who created them, and made them firm of make, and whenever We will, We can replace them with others like them (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 28:463).

- يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ قَتَاتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿النبأ: ١٨﴾

A day whereupon the trumpet will be blown, and you will come in multitudes (Daryabadi, 2007a, Al-Quran, 18:468).

Before he attempts an interpretation of these verses, Amritsari mentions Swami Dayanand's self-prescribed principle regarding the study of the scriptures of religions not ascribed to by the reader: "It is impermissible to deduce from the text a meaning unintended by the speaker or Shari'." He then establishes the Ārya Samāji violation of said principle by their utilization of Qur'anic verses to prove reincarnation, knowing that the revealer of the Qur'an in no way meant for it to be interpreted to justify reincarnation by allusion or explicitly. The Qur'an, says Amritsari, does not discuss punishment in terms of reincarnation as animals. The nature of its punishment is clear as day, and it is the entrance of man into hell. He elaborates further, now as a commentator of sorts on the presumption of his opponent *Lek Ram*:

"The difficulty is that *Lek Ram & Atma Ram* are deceived into believing every instance of their eyes beholding the word monkey or pig or bird to be a reference to the *Bhog Joni* into which are categorized the animal bodies. This, I believe fully, was deliberate and results in the alteration of the meaning of Allah's words, and their (attempted) erasure, and their interpretation in a manner unsuited to their original meaning."

Next, Amritsari interprets the verses mentioned by his opponents as Qur'anic evidence of reincarnation:

- The first, second and third verses indicate the present deformity of a people and not the transferal of their souls from body to body, or their rebirths. There are great degrees of differences between the infliction of deformities and the reincarnation of souls, and the verses,

therefore, are in no way linkable to reincarnation.

- The fourth verse, however, refers to the taking of Adam's children from his loins and their subsequent testimony to God's oneness. There is once again no reference to reincarnation in said verse.
- The fifth verse announces a new life for the martyrs in Allah's kingdom, not in different bodies either human or animal, but as themselves, for the verse says "They are alive with their Lord" which implies ignorance of their life's continuation.
- The sixth verse demonstrates God's immense capacity to exchange disobedient people with other (obedient) ones.
- The seventh verse relates the situation of the swarming crowds towards God on the day of judgement.
- The eighth verse is specific to the devil who was banished from paradise, "debased".
- The ninth verse alludes to the young men who sought refuge in a cave with their dog.
- The tenth verse is specific to the state of those in hellfire – which is the nature of the Islamic punishment – and can in no way be interpreted to mean anything but that.
- The eleventh verse and the twelfth indicate death which is unquestionably the fate of every mortal but are – once again – not open to interpretation as reincarnation.
- The thirteenth verse, Amritsari proved, had been modified by *Lek Ram & Atma Ram*, the word "illa" (roughly translated to the preposition but in English, as *La Ilaha Illa'llah* translates to *No God but God* in the Islamic proclamation of faith) was omitted and – by some convenient dint of fate – replaced by *Kaanat*, the past conjugation of the verb to be or *Kaana*, which altered the verse enough for the two academics to be able to project upon it reincarnation. (Amritsari, 1904, p.36–41)

An interesting rational attempt by Amritsari to respond to the Reincarnation theory in Hinduism in general (and Ārya Samāji particularly) runs thus: we must admit

the high probability of humankind having a creator and that creator creating humankind at one point in time. Now if one supposes that the soul inhabits bodies by its deeds in a previous life, it follows that at the time of creation, every soul occurred in a human body, seeing that is the one in which innocent souls are birthed. This then means that animals in any form did not inhabit the earth at the time of its creation, which is an implausible claim.

Building onto this argument, he further reasons that if humankind's division into social strata and the gender binary is also a manifestation of their souls' previous deeds, it then follows that the first generation of humans – innocent, sinless souls that they were – were all born as men, and that is a blow to their reproductive capacities as a society at large.

Another interesting question raised by Amritsari is that of differently-abled individuals; deformities or disabilities like blindness or incapacitated limbs in human bodies cannot be reasoned through by those who believe the human body to be the *Karam Joni* (the Place of Action); they would – upon being confronted by any such individual – immediately put it down as a manifestation of past deeds, which would then compel one to ask: “But isn't the human body not a place of punishment, but a place of action?” For if it is, then such disabilities should not exist, and if it is not, then the entire premise of reincarnation is at stake.

Amritsari argues, too, that the number of animals on this Earth – if we accept the idea that animal bodies are the *Bhog Joni* or the place of punishment – should far outnumber the humans on this Earth seeing only the Hindus should be reincarnated as humans and the followers of all other faiths as animals for their infidelity to the Hindu faith.

Another compelling argument by Amritsari is that all just consideration dictates that a soul knows its mistakes and identifies the consequences of those mistakes to truly learn from them. The Hindus, however, even when reborn as humans, remember nothing of their past lives, thus rendering any possibility of learning from those past lives ridiculous. He maintains, furthermore, that the Hindus should thank all the nations – including the Muslims – who

eat animal meat for releasing the many tortured souls that roam this earth in pain.

Similarly, he questions the Brahman's fascination with worldly matters when pitted against the Hindu belief that while rebirth as an animal is a form of punishment, rebirth as a human is an opportunity for growth in terms of faith and knowledge (Amritsari, n.d., p.765–66). The above arguments mirror perfectly Amritsari's manner and approach when engaging in polemical dialogue or argument. He is clear, concise and divergent in his methodology, advancing upon a topic from all angles possible and disputing claims with expert polemic discourse.

### Conclusions & Findings

- Amritsari was an eminent and prominent scholar of the Indian subcontinent who worked tirelessly to demonstrate the superior value system of Islam as a religion as well its inherent positives. He re-established the faith of ordinary Muslims in their religion.
- His work was exemplary in retaining the Muslim identity in a time when Muslims were systematically oppressed intellectually, and protecting them from awful psychological torture.
- Amritsari used every tool at his disposal including the massively popular print media of the twentieth century (even printed newspapers by himself), oratory and polemical dialogues with other religions.
- His work addressed diverse niches in Hindu-Muslim polemics, including the issue of the eternity of the soul, reincarnation and revelation.
- Amritsari's deep study of Hindu and Christian scriptures lends an authenticity to his polemics that is very distinct. His derivations from the Gita and the Vedas as employed during dialogues are a thing to behold.
- Amritsari highlighted in his dialogues and written works the weaknesses and logical discrepancies in Hindu doctrines and creeds.
- Something that distinguishes Amritsari, again, is his swiftness in rising to challenges instead of putting off responses; it indicates an acute awareness of the urgency with which the Muslim community – and in some cases like the

Najina Debate, even Muslim scholarship – needed a response to Hindu or Christian objections on Islam from this well-known polemical figure.

- His work showcases not only his divergent knowledge of Hinduism & other religions and his intimate relationship with Islam and the Indian Muslim community but also the dedication with which he approached his work. His relentless fight against the anti-Islamic elements active in twentieth-century India confirms his unapologetic defence of the Muslim cause.

There is a great scope and potential in this research for a deeper analysis and exploration of the various Hindu doctrines & beliefs like a revelation and the eternity of the soul as discussed in his work.

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